

4VAC15-20-151 (New)

Definitions and Miscellaneous: In General: Manipulation of vegetation on department-owned land

Summary:

The proposal is to (i) prohibit planting, manipulating, cutting, mutilating, destroying, or removing vegetation and (ii) prohibit the removal of minerals, artifacts, or other property from department-owned lands unless otherwise provided for in this regulation section.

Proposed language of Amendment:

4VAC15-20-151. Manipulation of vegetation on department-owned land.

- A. It shall be unlawful to plant, manipulate, cut, mutilate, destroy, or remove vegetation or to remove other minerals, artifacts or other property from agency owned lands.
- B. Nothing in this section will prohibit the gathering of mushrooms, berry picking or the collection of other fruits
- C. The use of down and dead trees and branches for use as fire wood while camping on a WMA shall be allowed by individuals with a valid camping permit issued by the Department.
- D. The Department may issue permits for the collection of fire wood under conditions and in locations determined by the Department
- E. Nothing in this section shall prohibit Department employees, contractors or permittees from engaging in agriculture, forestry, herbicide application, or other habitat restoration and manipulation for the purpose of enhancing wildlife habitat and populations

Rationale:

Establishing food plots is a popular method for enhancing opportunities to harvest game. This practice is commonly performed by individuals on private property and sometimes by professional wildlife managers on public lands. Instances of individuals cultivating agency property and establishing personal food plots on WMAs have been increasing. This destroys existing vegetation and may introduce undesirable species. Individuals who engage in these activities are not aware of the potential presence of sensitive natural and historic sites and may inadvertently disturb or damage these resources. Furthermore, these plantings are established to benefit individuals as opposed the public at large. The presence of these unauthorized plantings can alter animal's movements and behavior and be contrary to established Wildlife Management Area plans.